

Claims

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A reheatable frozen food product comprising an edible filling between toasted bread slices having cracked crusts.
2. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein each toasted bread slice has an original respective thickness and the cracked crusts comprise fissures
10 formed by compressing, in an unfrozen state, the toasted bread slices effective to crack the respective crusts while retaining at least 90% of original respective thickness of each bread slice.
3. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein the edible filling
15 comprises cheese.
4. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 3, wherein the edible filling comprises meat.
- 20 5. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein the bread slices each are independently selected from the group consisting of white bread, brown bread, whole wheat bread, oat bran, sourdough bread, rye bread, Hawaiian bread, pumpernickel bread, baguette, soda bread, corn bread, foccacia bread, and naan bread.
- 25 6. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 3, wherein the cheese is selected from the group consisting of process cheese, cheddar cheese, Swiss cheese, American cheese, Provolone cheese, mozzarella cheese, Parmesan cheese, blue cheese, Monterey Jack cheese, Romano cheese, cream cheese, Havarti cheese, Gouda cheese, Muenster cheese, Asiago cheese, Gorgonzola cheese, and combinations thereof.

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7. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein the filling comprises meat filling selected from the group consisting of beef, pork, poultry, fish, and combinations thereof.
- 5 8. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein the filling comprises vegetable filling selected from the group consisting of lettuce, soy meal, water cress, tomato, peppers, onions, garlic, bean sprouts, cucumber, and combinations thereof.
- 10 9. A reheatable frozen food product according to claim 1, wherein the filling includes a condiment selected from the group consisting of ranch dressing, mustard, pickle relish, catsup, barbecue sauce, mayonnaise, butter, margarine, honey, olive oil, canola oil, salad dressing, horse radish sauce, and combinations thereof.
- 15 10. A packaged sandwich suitable for freezing and reheating for consumption comprising toasted bread slices having respective cracked crusts and an edible filing between the slices.
11. A process for making a sliced bread product comprising providing a bread slice
20 with a crust portion, toasting the bread slice, and compressing the toasted bread slice effective to crack the crust portion without permanently and substantially flattening the bread slice.
12. The process of claim 11, wherein the compressing comprises feeding roller
25 contact pressure to a side of the toasted bread slice.
13. The process of claim 11, wherein the compressing comprises conducting the toasted bread slice through a pressure nip defined by at least one roller.

14. The process of claim 11, wherein the compressing comprises contacting a reciprocal platen press member with a side of the toasted bread slice.

15. The process of claim 11, wherein the toasting of the bread slice comprises
5 grilling at least one side of the bread slice at a temperature of at least about 475°F for a predetermined amount of time.

16. The process of claim 15, wherein the predetermined amount of time for toasting is less than about 60 seconds.

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17. The process of claim 11 further comprises applying an edible oil-containing substance to the cracked crust portion.

18. The process of claim 11 further comprises freezing the toasted bread slice.

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19. The process of claim 18 further comprises reheating the frozen bread slice so as to provide a bread slice having a chewable crust.

20. The process of claim 11, wherein the bread slice has an original thickness and
20 the compressing without permanently and substantially flattening the toasted bread slice comprises compressing the toasted bread slice so that the bread crust portion is cracked and the bread slice retains at least 90% of the original thickness.

21. The process of claim 11, wherein the compressing without permanently and
25 substantially flattening the toasted bread slice comprises compressing the toasted bread slice having an original thickness to a reduced thickness of about 40 to about 60% while compression is being applied so that the bread crust portion is cracked and the bread slice returns to at least 90% of the original thickness after the step of compressing.

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22. The process of claim 11, wherein the bread slice comprises a crumb surrounded at least in part by the crust portion and toasting the bread slice comprises browning the crumb.

5 23. A process for making a reheatable frozen sandwich comprising, providing bread slices having crusts, toasting the bread slices, compressing the toasted bread slices to crack the crusts without permanently and substantially flattening the bread slices, constructing a sandwich by placing an edible filling between the toasted bread slices having cracked crusts, and freezing the sandwich.

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24. The process of claim 23 further comprises packaging the sandwich.

25. The process of claim 23, wherein the compressing comprises applying roller contact pressure to a side of each toasted bread slice.

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26. The process of claim 23, wherein the compressing comprises feeding each toasted bread slice through a pressure nip defined by at least one roller.

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27. The process of claim 23, wherein the compressing comprises contacting a side of each toasted bread slice with a reciprocal platen press member.

28. The process of claim 23 further comprises applying an edible oil-containing substance to the cracked crust before performing any freezing and reheating of the toasted bread slice.

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29. The process of claim 23, wherein the compressing without permanently and substantially flattening the toasted bread slices comprises compressing each toasted bread slice having a respective original thickness so that each respective bread crust is cracked and the respective bread slice returns to at least 90% of the respective original
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30. The process of claim 23, wherein the compressing without permanently and substantially flattening the toasted bread slice comprises compressing the toasted bread slice having an original thickness to a reduced thickness of about 40 to about 60% while compression is being applied so that the bread crust is cracked and the bread slice returns to at least 90% of the original thickness after the steps of compressing is completed.

31. The process of claim 23, wherein toasting comprises heating at least one side of a bread slice having a crumb surrounded at least in part by the crust sufficient to brown the crumb.

32. The process of claim 23, wherein the toasting of the bread slice comprises grilling at least one side of the bread slice at a temperature of at least about 475°F for less than about 60 seconds.

33. The process of claim 32, the toasting of the bread slice comprises heating at least one side of the bread slice with an impingement oven for a length of time sufficient for toasting.

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